

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the majority and the final 30 minutes under the control of the Republicans.

The Senator from West Virginia.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, yesterday the President of the United States stood on the steps of the White House and had the audacity to lecture Congress about how to do our work. It is precisely a lack of Presidential leadership, potentially a lack of policy interest, and certainly a lack of understanding of responsible Government that is getting in the way of solving our Nation's problems—the President.

This Congress inherited a growing deficit from Mr. Bush—his created deficit, not his father's; his—and Congress has committed to live by a pay-as-you-go way of spending which makes life very tough. It is the absolute height of hypocrisy to have a President who effectively frittered away, gave away, to his rich friends a \$5.6 trillion surplus and to have him lecturing the Congress about skyrocketing spending.

Did all of that go to his rich friends? No; most of it did. Some of it went to his brilliantly conceived war in Iraq which has made America a much less safe place to live, while the Taliban and others grow stronger in Afghanistan.

America needed, when he took office and especially after 9/11, to make some substantial investments in our defense and intelligence infrastructure, as well as very new and very good homeland security initiatives to respond to the September 11 attacks and ongoing threats. That spending was required for our national security.

Generally speaking around here, we take national security pretty seriously. We do on the Intelligence Committee. But that is not where the bulk of taxpayers' dollars has gone under this administration. Instead, we have given trillions of dollars away in tax cuts to millionaires and billionaires, and we are in year 5 of an astronomically expensive Iraq war with a failed strategy that is, as I said, making America less safe.

I am going to say to the President, this is not a political speech. I do not often come to the floor of the Senate to speak. I prefer to do my work in committees and in conferences. But I am fed up and outraged at what has transpired from the White House.

Meanwhile, on the home front, our domestic priorities, such as children, we have met a concrete wall of resistance. The veto of the Children's Health

Insurance Program rests with him and it rests with him, President Bush, alone.

The Democratic leader was talking about some of the falsehoods the President has used in arguing against—publicly, constantly, all the time—the Children's Health Insurance Program, none of which are true. All of those who not only created the program, as I did along with John Chafee and ORRIN HATCH, but those of us who are working on it now, in an extraordinarily bipartisan way amongst ourselves and with the House, are trying to make it work. But over all that, there is this looming understanding that no matter what we do, the President is going to veto the bill. I will get into that later.

So now the President is threatening to veto and then veto again and then veto again appropriations bills aimed at investing in other pressing domestic needs. While, at the same time he is pushing to make the tax cuts for billionaires and millionaires, that I referred to before, permanent while advocating little to nothing for hard-working, middle-class families.

Congress is keeping its promise to the working-class families in West Virginia and around the Nation. We try to put the best interests of our soldiers, our children, our veterans, and our families first, and we have done so. We are the ones who have done that. If the President thinks that vetoing bill after bill and threatening to do so, setting the tone to do so, somehow achieves his goals, it is going to make him even less relevant to the American people than he is now.

Let me comment a little bit more on his statement regarding CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program. It is certainly the best program since Medicaid in terms of health care and one which is working, according to all analysis, efficiently and effectively and humanely.

As we all know, after months of intense negotiations between Republicans and Democrats, Congress presented a bill to the White House that would continue the health care coverage of the 6.6 million children currently covered and add on approximately 4 million more. It would give 10 million-plus children insurance, little children who have no health insurance, and we want to tend to that problem.

It has been an entirely bipartisan process. CHUCK GRASSLEY, the honorable senior Senator from Iowa, MAX BAUCUS, the honorable senior Senator from Montana, JAY ROCKEFELLER, the honorable junior Senator from West Virginia, and ORRIN HATCH, the honorable senior Senator from Utah have worked for months, more importantly have our staffs, on a bipartisan basis, have worked for months, 7 days a week, through the night, to try to make this bill work.

The President wanted to put \$5 billion into it, which would have cut a lot of children out of health insurance. Obviously, the Democrats wanted to put

in \$50 billion into it. The Republicans wanted to put \$22 billion into it. What we did, the four of us Senators who are doing this, met every single afternoon for weeks and for months from 5 to 7 to figure out a way, arguing, walking out sometimes, negotiating, and finally coming to the figure of \$35 billion, and we were all happy. We all shook hands with pride because we knew we were doing something good for America's children. There were no politics there. It was pure negotiations in the interest of the people who don't start wars, who don't get our Nation into trouble, and who don't have any health insurance.

Congress met its responsibility. We did the right thing by our children. The President perhaps didn't understand the policy involved. I don't know. As the leader indicated, he didn't want to talk about it. But he certainly deliberately told a lot of falsehoods about the program, and the leader also discussed that situation, never mentioning that 91 percent of all children retrospectively and prospectively—the 6.6 million plus the 4 million—are at 200 percent of poverty or below—91 percent, 9 out of 10.

I see them with my eyes in West Virginia. I see them as a VISTA volunteer. I see them now as a relatively senior, though still junior, Senator because they are people. When their teeth are not fixed, their lives are changed. When their baby teeth are not fixed, don't worry about the adult teeth to follow; they are already compromised. And immunizations, EPSDT, all kinds of other health care needs.

We did the right thing by our children. The President—and it was the President who decided to veto this bill—it was the President who abdicated his moral responsibility to our children in favor of tobacco and partisan politics, or ideology. It doesn't matter, does it, if he is going to veto the bill. I just came from a meeting a half hour ago where Republicans and Democrats from the House and Senate were trying to work out a compromise, but there was this looming sense that whatever we do was going to get vetoed, so it didn't make any difference.

Ten million children—this isn't some controversial dam or earmark. This is uninsured children. Some of them had been previously uninsured and now are, and 4 million more who are uninsured. They are children. If you don't get a healthy start in life, everything is compromised—your health, your self-esteem, your prospects, your future, your life. It starts with health care.

It is the President who continues to tell these falsehoods about our bill to take attention away from the real issue. This is not about the cost of the bill, this is not about uninsured adults, this is not about illegal immigrants. This is about not wanting to give poor and low-income children and children whose parents cannot afford private insurance access to something monumental called health care.

The President said so himself in a statement which I can barely get out of